



SR 502 Interchange Project: Frequently Asked Questions

Why is WSDOT building this interchange?

This interchange is intended to:

- Ease congestion and improve safety both northbound and southbound on I-5.
- Improve safety at the NE 179th Street interchange by reducing congestion.
- Improve safety on I-5 by reducing weaving between the junction of I-5 and I-205 and the existing exit.
- Help improve access to Battle Ground.

When constructed, this new interchange will provide an additional access point from SR 502 to I-5. The new SR 502 connection also will reduce travel times by shortening the route and will provide a more direct connection to I-5, a controlled-access highway.

The new connection from I-5 to SR 502 also will improve mobility along I-5 through north Clark County. Safety at the I-5/NE 179th interchange will be further improved by reducing the number of vehicles on the northbound off-ramp, and by reducing lane change conflicts between NE 179th Street and the I-5/I-205 junction.

What is WSDOT proposing?

In March 2004, WSDOT presented a Recommended Build Alternative for the new interchange. The Recommended Build Alternative met a number of criteria, including basic safety goals, the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) requirements for project location, and avoiding or minimizing environmental impacts. Interested individuals can read about the Recommended Build Alternative on the project Web site at www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR502/Interchange/rba.cfm.

How did WSDOT develop the Recommended Build Alternative?

The project team used two levels of evaluation to develop the Recommended Build Alternative. Originally, WSDOT evaluated 12 options (including several submitted by the public) against a first level of screening. Answers to all the following questions had to be "yes" for an option to proceed to the second level of evaluation.

- Does the option meet basic safety goals?
- Does the option meet the FHWA's requirements for project location?
- Will this option provide an acceptable environmental outcome?

Three options moved forward to the second level. Since two of these were very similar, they were combined into one option. The two final options were then evaluated by looking at all the following details:

- Number of streams that will be crossed.
- Acres of land required to replace wetlands disturbed by this project.
- Number of potentially hazardous material sites that may be encountered.
- Disruption to forested areas and/or land adjacent to water (riparian areas).
- Acres of private property to be acquired.
- Number of residences to be relocated.
- Number of businesses to be relocated.

Option E-4 best answered all these questions; it was selected as the Recommended Build Alternative.

Is a connection from the interchange to the west side of I-5 possible?

A west-side connection, from a new I-5 interchange in the vicinity of NE 219th Street, is not part of Clark County's Comprehensive Plan. A state route or interstate highway cannot connect to a county road if that connection is not part of the county's Comprehensive Plan.

It is the county's responsibility to decide what county roads connect to state routes and interstates and how they connect in residential and commercial districts. That decision by the county is separate from this interchange project.

A west-side connection could still be built in the future if the Recommended Build Alternative is constructed.

Why was the NE 219th Street vicinity selected for an interchange rather than another major road such as NE 259th Street?

The I-5/I-205 North Corridor Study completed in 2001 analyzed the 14 miles of I-5 and I-205 from the Padden Parkway north through the NE 134th Street interchange to La Center. That study looked at potential interchanges with I-5 at NE 219th Street and with I-205 at Carty Road and NE 50th Avenue. The study recommended the NE 219th Street area because it connected directly with SR-502 into Battle Ground.

The I-5/NE 219th Street Access Decision Report (2001) looked again at potential interchanges (NE 199th Street, NE 219th Street, and Carty Road). It also evaluated significant upgrades to the I-5/NE 179th Street interchange. After examination, it was concluded that an interchange within a half mile north or south of NE 219th Street on I-5 would best serve the transportation needs for I-5, Battle Ground and north Clark County. The Recommended Build Alternative is the most appropriately spaced from existing interchanges of any of the options. It also provides the most direct connection to points

near Battle Ground and northeast of I-5 without significant reconstruction of existing rural roadways.

Why is WSDOT not using the existing NE 219th Street for the new interchange alignment?

Option C proposed using the existing NE 219th Street for the connection to I-5. While this option passed the first level of screening, Option C crossed more streams, presented more hazardous material sites within a quarter-mile radius, and relocated four more businesses than Option E-4.

Will WSDOT close off NE 219th Street?

WSDOT is NOT proposing to close NE 219th Street. It will remain open in its present condition and will provide local access to businesses in Duluth and residents in the area.

Customers would be able to get to Duluth businesses from SR 502 via NE 10th Avenue. They could go east by traveling on NE 219th Street to a new right turn onto eastbound SR 502 in the area of NE 15th Avenue. Providing this access will help businesses in Duluth by allowing drive-by traffic with easy return access to eastbound SR 502.

A WSDOT goal is to limit access to state highways such as SR 502. Minimizing direct access allows the highway to carry large amounts of traffic efficiently and safely. Studies across the country show that frequent access from driveways and side streets not only slows traffic but also increases accident rates.

What will happen to NE 219th Street and NE 22nd Avenue? Will access be affected?

The SR 502 interchange project and the new SR 502 alignment will transition into the existing NE 219th Street at some point west of NE 22nd Avenue. At this time, no changes to the NE 22nd Avenue/NE 219th Street intersection are proposed. In the summer of 2004, WSDOT will start a study of the SR 502 Corridor. The study will look at alignment, side street access, and design issues from where the interchange project stops eastward into Battle Ground to determine the alignment that will move traffic safely and efficiently.

Will WSDOT rezone surrounding residential properties to commercial?

Clark County is responsible for rezoning. Changing residential properties to commercial requires a change in Clark County's Comprehensive Plan. WSDOT's plan must work within the existing parameters of county zoning.

How much impact will there be to the wetlands?

WSDOT estimates the Recommended Build Alternative directly impacts up to 6 acres of wetlands. Clark County, the State of Washington, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers require projects that impact wetlands to provide mitigation (or compensation) for impacts. It is anticipated that up to 6 acres of impacted wetlands in the project area will require approximately 11 acres of wetland mitigation. WSDOT is completing a wetlands measurement, which may somewhat change the estimated wetland impacts and mitigation.

What will happen to the historic building in the vicinity of NE 219th Street and NE 10th Avenue?

Federal regulations require federally funded projects, like this one, to avoid or minimize impacts to historically significant properties. A historically significant property is one that is already listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. WSDOT is investigating whether any properties in the project area are considered historically significant. If any properties are determined to be historically significant, the project will protect these properties according to federal regulations.

When will a final decision be made?

An Environmental Assessment is being prepared to evaluate potential impacts on the environment by the Recommended Build Alternative. The Environmental Assessment studies a broad range of resources—both built environment (land use, economic, social elements, etc.) and natural environment (wetlands, biological, etc.). This evaluation, compared to the preliminary environmental analysis conducted earlier in the project, is more in-depth and based on detailed design engineering of the Recommended Build Alternative. The Environmental Assessment is scheduled to be available for public review in spring 2005. After addressing public comments on the assessment, FHWA will issue a decision on the level of environmental impacts. If the FHWA issues a finding of no significant impact (FONSI), the project will move to final design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction.

Are recommendations from the I-5 Trade Corridor Study being considered?

Freight mobility was a key consideration in the I-5 Trade Corridor Study and its follow up, the I-5 Trade and Transportation Partnership Study. One goal of this interchange project is to ease congestion for commerce on I-5 and is in keeping with recommendations of those two studies.

Are staff meetings open to the public?

Staff meetings are not open to the public, but WSDOT staff is available to meet with the public, answer questions, and respond to comments and input from the community.

What is the project timeline?

- **Fall 2003:** October 21 Environmental Assessment Open House and Scoping Meeting to introduce the project and gather comments. Preliminary concept alternatives illustrated possible options for I-5 on- and off-ramps and their connection to local roads.
- **Fall 2003–Winter 2004:** Preliminary concept alternatives developed in more detail and alternatives developed from public comment. WSDOT began to identify potential impacts of each alternative.
- **Spring 2004:** March 25 Open House with public discussion of Recommended Build Alternative and evaluation of alternatives.
- **Winter/Spring 2005:** Access Hearing and adoption of the right-of-way plans.
- **Spring 2005:** Public review of Environmental Assessment. The assessment will identify potential environmental impacts of the Recommended Build Alternative.
- **Summer 2005–Fall 2006:** Right-of-way acquisition. WSDOT will purchase property to make room for the interchange.
- **Fall 2006:** Final design complete.
- **Spring 2007:** Construction begins.
- **2009:** Construction complete.

How can I get more information?

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